

Here is what David had to say:

#1: What was the most difficult part about your paddle trip and how did you overcome (if you did) the situation? “Truly the hardest part was the logistics of getting from Texas to Three Forks and then getting from St Louis back home. Without Michael Clark in St Louis I would have had a lot more trouble. I was lucky that the river was not flowing too high or too low, and that I had no prolonged periods of bad weather. I had one day where it rained all day - the day going through the swamps by the Niobrara River. Having a shelter to pitch a tent under so that things could dry off and having nice people like the town policeman come by and assure me that I was OK staying where I was made a cold wet miserable day alright in the end.”

#2 What do you feel was the most important thing that you planned for on your trip that you actually benefited from? “Getting in touch with Norm Miller and other members of Missouri River Paddlers. Because of my contacts with this group I was able to get my ride around Great Falls, meet up with Dave Miller, get a place to stay and a free dinner at Atchison, get a portage around the last dam, and ultimately meet up with Mike Clark. Dave Miller's book was also essential in providing background, though much of the detail regarding marinas and people is out of date.”

#3 Was there anything that you planned for then you felt was unnecessary or overdone? Explain. “I prepared way too much food. In the end I did not have three of my 8 resupply boxes sent on to me.”

#4 What were the 5-most important pieces of gear you carried on the trip? Explain. “Other than kayak and paddle ? :) 1) I-phone. Though I did not have reliable phone service for much of the way, it was invaluable when I did for arranging portages, meeting people, checking the radar. 2) solar panel with battery pack. 3) C-tug kayak cart. Essential for the portages. 4) Gaia GPS app on my i-phone. After downloading all the maps I could use the GPS on the phone even without cell service. 5) Collapsible water bladders. I had 30 L capacity that allowed me to go several days without need to pick up water.”

#5 Prior to your trip, what was your weakest asset or least skilled or qualified trait for the trip and how do you overcome this? “Inexperience. I had never done a trip of that length by myself. My age (62) and level of physical fitness (had back surgery 4 months earlier) were not real issues. I have experienced some issues with arthritis since I returned home, but nothing to make me regret the trip or make me not want to do a similar trip again. Now I feel confident in tackling other trips, such as going to the keys from Corpus Christi or going down the Mississippi.”

#6 What was the least important item(s) that you brought and discovered there was never a need for? “Water filter/purifying tablets. Used the filter once, and the tablets once, but only because I had them and wanted to use them.”

#7: What was the biggest surprise of the journey? Something you did not anticipate. “How hard it was to access towns along the river. I was always apprehensive about leaving my kayak and gear unattended, so did not go into towns at all, though I was also under some time constraints.

But even if I had wanted to, there were few places in Bismark, Pierre, Kansas City where bars or restaurants were easily accessible from the river for people in paddle craft.”

#8 What kind of boat did you paddle and what were its good qualities and also the things you did not like about it. “I paddled a 17 foot Delta Kayak Expedition. It was the perfect vessel for this trip. Fast, stable and spacious.”

#9: How did you plan your meals/food? Did this system work good for you and what would you change regarding this? “I dried food at home (fruit, vegetables, pasta sauce and meat). Made up packages including dried potatoes, rice, quick cook dried beans etc. and these were packed into boxes that my wife shipped to various marinas, on the way. The food quality was excellent, but I overestimated how much I would actually end up eating. Towards the end I just bought graham crackers, peanut butter and jelly and ate that a lot of the time as I did not want to go to the trouble of cooking and washing up - especially in Missouri where it was hot and the bugs were bad outside the tent. I did lose about 15 lbs in weight which was not a problem. I would do the same again though, but would cut back on the quantity. Tuna, salmon and chicken in foil packets were light and provided a lot of protein. Chocolate bars were nice but tended to get too soft and messy. I took vitamins to make up for any lack of vegetables. I took 2 liters of Scotch and a box of red wine. Having something to sip on at the end of the day was very rewarding. I replenished the wine twice and the Scotch once.”

#10 What was your system for obtaining drinking water and what were the benefits as well as the disadvantages you had dealing with water. “I carried up to 30 L at one time in 2 large bladders, a 2L Camelbak that I wore on top of my PFD for easy access to water during the day, and several 1 litre bladders as well as 3 one liter nalgene bottles. I picked up water from campsites and marinas. It was much harder to get water below Kansas City and on one day I would have had to walk into a town (several miles) to get water if it were not for a stranger who went and brought me 8 liters without me even asking him for it. The disadvantage of carrying 30 liters at a time is that it is heavy and takes up a lot of space. The advantage of having bladders is that they do not take up much space when empty.” (L:David with Jonathan Lauten in Jefferson City, Mo- 2013)

#11: If you were going to give advice for someone planning the same journey what do you feel would be best advice and things to consider that you now know about this journey? “While you will meet a lot of people who will help you, give you food and shelter, be aware that you might not meet those people when you need them most, so be self sufficient. Have a GPS and download in advance important things like where campsites/marinas are where you might get water. Make some contacts at campsites/marinas before you leave and have their phone numbers. Have a cell phone that will work in Montana and North Dakota - AT&T coverage is poor. A SPOT unit, while not essential, provides peace of mind to your family and allows others to follow your trip - vital if you are doing it for a charity. Most importantly, give yourself plenty of time. I limited myself to doing it in 3 months. I wish I had at least another month, I could have stopped more often, explored towns and sites away from the river, and not had to worry about making miles in poor weather because I had to make miles. If you ride a bicycle on land, you will soon realize that there is the same proportion of jerks on water who will steer to close to try and swamp you or otherwise inconvenience you. Suppress the urge to shout rude words at them. On the water you

are at a decided disadvantage. Most people on the river have no clue about distances. Carry some cash. Always offer to pay for the ride/portage/6-pack that you have been offered/given. Many of the kindest people will have no more and probably less than you. Look at Google Earth to get an idea of what distances might be involved between known water stops and potential places to stay/camp. Load that info on your GPS device.”

